



# Commodities

So far in this course we have had a [general introduction](#), and then looked at Marx's 1847 "[Wage Labour and Capital](#)", the "[Communist Manifesto](#)" of 1848, and Marx's 1865 "[Value, Price and Profit](#)".

Now, and for the remaining eight parts, this course will use text from Marx's greatest single work: Capital, Volume 1. We will take nearly all of it, conveniently divided, in sequence, starting with Chapter 1 – Commodities (download linked below).

[Chapter 1 of Capital Volume 1 of Marx's Capital](#) (attached) is a text that has been the material for many a political school. It begins with this great definition of commodities:

*“The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as ‘an immense accumulation of commodities,’ its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity.*

*“A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference. Neither are we here concerned to know how the object satisfies these wants, whether directly as means of subsistence, or indirectly as means of production.”*

And it later says:

*“A use-value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because human labour in the abstract has been embodied or materialised in it.”*

The second section of the chapter explores this dual character of commodities.

The third section, which contains quite a lot of formulas, is omitted for the sake of brevity. Those few sections of the book that have been left out of this course can be read on [Marxists Internet Archive](#).

The fourth and last section of the chapter is on the Fetishism

of Commodities, meaning that in a capitalist society the relations between commodities replace the relations between people.

In commodities, writes Marx:

*“the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour.”*

If there is a single purpose for Marx's book, it is to re-make human relations so that they are relations between humans again, or in other words: Marx's purpose is to restore human beings to themselves.

- The above serves to introduce the original reading-text: [Capital V1, Chapter 1, Commodities \[abridged\], Karl Marx, 1867.](#)
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